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## THE MISSION INDIANS ON THE SAN JACINTO RESERVATION.

BY MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON.

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\*Note.—Part of this paper was published in *Out West* for February-March—double number—1909, under the title “Saboba Indians of Southern California.”

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When our government, in its treaty with Mexico, in 1848, paid fifteen million dollars and assumed a million and a half more for debts due to citizens of the United States, Mexico ceded to us a territory of over half a million square miles, covering what is now known as California, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, Utah and parts of Colorado and Wyoming.

But these vast stretches of territory were not deeded alone, for in this treaty, known as the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, named from the little town where it was made, Mexico turned over to our care a race of people born on the soil, yet, not recognizable as citizens of either the Old, or the New World. The Spaniards and Mexicans inhabiting the territory could become citizens, but the Indians could only be classified as “Wards of the Nation.”

From time to time many of these Indian tribes revolted, as the standing army of the United States, and many battles testify, but the tribes known as the Mission Indians were accustomed to subjection and were not by nature war-like, or independent. Yet, they claimed some rights, and their struggle to maintain these rights shows how ignorant we were of the wrongs endured by the first inhabitants of this sunny land.

In 1852, President Fillmore, appointed the Hon. B. D. Wilson, the first mayor of Los Angeles, as Indian Agent for the Southern District. (1)

According to Wilson, this Indian district included, “Tulereños, Cahuillos, San Luisenos and Diegoños. All of these were attached

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(1) As there is some dispute as to who was the first mayor of Los Angeles the following note from Wilson’s narrative may give some light upon this subject: “When the town of Los Angeles was incorporated as a city, the people elected me its first mayor. I only served a few months, and then resigned.” Narrative, MS., of B. D. Wilson, A. D. 1841-1878.

to the Missions, more or less. The Yumas and Mojavos," Wilson says, also belonged to this district, but, "were never much under mission influence—if at all, as nations." (2)

In writing of the Cahuillos he says of their numerous rancherias, "I am unable, just now, to give the number and names of all their villages, San Gorgonia, San Jacinto and Coyote are among the best known though others even nearer the desert are more populous."

"Associated with the Cahuillos may sometimes be put the Serranos," and, Wilson adds, that he was "not prepared to say" that these two were "not the same people, to all intents and purposes at this day." He quotes Hugo Reid as locating the "Serranos along the upper water of the Santa Ana river, and between the Los Angeles County Indians (whom he calls Gabrielinos) and the Cahuillos."

Of this branch of the great Shoshonean family, Wilson says, "The Cahuillo chiefs, and many of the people speak Spanish. Many still claim to be 'Christians'; the majority of them are not, while the reverse is the case with San Luiseños and Diegoños. A greater part of the *neophytes* of San Gabriel, the wealthiest of the missions, were Cahuillos. Their name means 'Master' in our language, or as some of them render it the 'Great Nation.' Their entire number now scarcely exceeds 3,000 souls."

This is what he wrote of the Mission Indians, "These Indians can be trained to self government in a short time. \* \* \* But let them be governed with the least possible violence to their personal independence and freedom; and so that, in all measures, they may be able to discover the strict justice of the government." This was not the dictum of a sentimentalist but the opinion of one who had been doomed to die a cruel death at the hands of Apaches from whom he later escaped. (3)

The following extracts from Wilson's report shows how serviceable the Indians had become to the Spanish settlers:

"These same Indians had built all the houses in the country,

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(2) The report of the Hon. B. D. Wilson on the Indians made to the Interior Dept. in 1853, from which the following quotations are taken, was never published by that Dept., and the office has "none in its library." The report was later published in the *Los Angeles Star* for July 18 to Sept. 12, 1868. Mr. Geo. S. Patton informs me that Mrs. Helen Jackson quoted from these copies of the *Star* when writing her report as special Indian agent, with Abbot Kinney; Mrs. Wilson having loaned her the papers for that purpose.

(3) In Wilson's Narrative, MS., he gives several instances where life was in jeopardy during Indian skirmishes in New Mexico and California.

planted all the fields and vineyards. Under the Mission they were masons, carpenters, plasterers, soap-makers, tanners, shoe-makers, blacksmiths, millers, bakers, cooks, brickmakers, carters and cart-makers, weavers and spinners, etc., etc."

"Considered in their relation to agriculture in this part of California," he adds, "these Indians are the only farmers living here, besides the Americans who have come into the country since the war, and a very few who were here before. The Californian Spaniard, so to speak, loves his fiery steed—not the plough. Many such a ranchero rich in cattle and goodly acres by the ten thousand, must go to his Indian neighbor, hard by on the rancho, if he would dine today, on his maize or frijole!"

He thus describes the Indians: "A spendthrift, yet willing to work if paid; never a beggar, save when old age or infirmity has overtaken him; humble, without servility; skilled in a great many useful things; yet full of vices, I am afraid, because he has so few encouragements to virtue. He always adheres to the truth, cost what it may; still many are petty thieves."

I may be pardoned this general introduction to the subject as we will be better able to understand the position of the Saboba, or any other Mission Indians after we reveal their status when first becoming wards of this nation.

As we have seen, the Hon. B. D. Wilson, in his report included San Jacinto among the Cahuilla, or Coahuilla, settlements and for this reason, I have referred to this Indian tribe, or sub-family.

The late Dr. Otis T. Mason, head curator, Department Anthropology, U. S. National Museum, groups the following tribes under the "Shoshonean family, Coahuilla, Karvia, Kauvuya, Agna Caliente, Santa Rosa, Cabazon, Torres, twenty-nine Palms and Cahuilla reservations; also Saboba Southern California." Saboba (School) Tahktam village." (4)

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(4) In the report made by Special Agents Helen Jackson and Abbot Kinney to the Department of the Interior, July 13, 1883—Senate Document 1883-1884, Vol. 1,—also published as an appendix in "A Century of Dishonor," the "Saboba Indians," are mentioned as belonging to the "Serrano Tribe," but the late O. T. Mason while including them in the Shoshonean family makes the following distinction: "Saboba (School), Shoshonean family, Tahktam village, San Jacinto valley." "Serrano, Shoshonean family, Morongo, San Manuel, the Serrano or Mountaineers, formerly Tahktam, a division of Tabikhar." Tahktam (Men), Shoshonean family called Serranos, dialect Coahuillo." "The Serranos live on a small reservation at San Bernardino and on the Morongo Reservation in the San Gorgonia Pass in Southern California." Aboriginal American Basketry, by Otis Tufton Mason.

While the "Coahuillas," or Cahuillas, "were and are the most powerful and best known of all these tribes," according to Dr. David Prescott Barrows, (5) the Indians of the Saboba, or San Jacinto Reservation, have many claims upon us, besides, being more accessible.

The little Indian town of Saboba rests quietly on low foothills crossed by a narrow wagon-road passing through the rancheria. These foothills rise and fall in rapid succession against higher hills that boldly outline themselves against a tall background of mountain spurs and peaks in the San Jacinto range of Riverside County.

The Saboba settlement adjoins a beautiful and fertile valley, dotted here and there with American homes and thrifty ranches, orchards and orange-groves that extend to the little towns of San Jacinto and Hemet. When we glance over the foothills occupied by these wards of the nation, knowing, as we do, the possibilities of the land when subjected to the leveling forces of grading-teams supplemented by miles of water pipes, we are glad that the government is on the side of the Indian. Were it not so, how soon these picturesque hills planted by nature—excepting where the green, fern-like pepper-trees shade the simple homes—would be appropriated by the white man. We are also glad the Indians accept the enlightened aid of the schools in order to have and to hold the free land of their fathers. For a little white church and a frame school house with the stars and stripes floating over it with the attendance bell calling for promptness and regularity conspicuous in the foreground, mark the influence of civilization upon these primitive people.

When Venegas, over one hundred and fifty years ago, wrote of the natives of Lower California, that they might "be called a nation who never arrive at manhood," he described life in its pastoral simplicity, but with education and time-values as dominant factors, the Indians learned they must either perish or adjust themselves to the demands of the ruling nation.

Less than five and twenty years ago these Saboba Indians were threatened with ejectment from the land their fathers had occupied for over a hundred years. They were but a remnant of a tribe, less than one hundred and sixty in number. But their village, or rancheria, was within the boundary of the Mexican grant patented to José A. Estudillo in 1842, and as the greater part of this grant had been sold to a company, the purchaser of the Saboba site proposed to eject these natives unless the government would buy all of his (Byrnes'—the purchaser's), allotted share, about 700 acres.

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(5) The Ethno-Botany of the Coahuilla Indians of Southern California. David Prescott Barrows, the University of Chicago Press, 1900.

When Mrs. Helen Hunt Jackson wrote her "Century of Dishonor," these wards of the nation were still uncertain of their fate, although, as she said, their right to the tract they had so long occupied and cultivated was beyond question.

Even the children of these dispirited Indians felt the red man's burden of homeless sorrow, and two of them just entering their 'teens felt impelled to appeal to the President of the United States for his aid in keeping the white man from ejecting them from the home of their ancestors, one little fellow making the pathetic plea for the land that, "We think it is ours, for God gave it to us first."

As we know, this case was brought before the courts, and, no one appearing for the Indians, it went against them by default. But the American people are not altogether unmindful of responsibilities toward these natives, and the friend of the Sabobas in their hour of need was the Indian Rights Association of Philadelphia, which assumed the responsibility of paying the necessary fees and had the case put again upon the calendar, with the result that the Saboba Reservation was secured to these Indians by possessory rights under the Mexican Treaty known as the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty. (6)

While the Saboba Reservation covers some 2,960 acres, only a small part of it, 150 acres, is under irrigation from a reservoir fed by springs.

After the aboriginal jacals, the first homes of the Sabobas were of adobe, but these are now supplanted by little frame houses of one, two or three rooms. Here and there are the ruins of a former adobe. Prominent among these are the ones, leveled by the earthquake on Christmas morning in 1899. (7) The Indians were celebrating in one adobe, but when the earthquake had passed over it, six were dead and as many injured.

This reservation has the honor of having had the first Indian teacher employed by the government in Southern California. This school was established in 1880, with Miss Mary Sheriff as teacher. Miss Sheriff had been a teacher of the freedmen, and when she opened her school in a little adobe, 11 by 18, she willingly allowed as many as 40 pupils at one time to call her teacher. She taught this school for seven years and now lives, as Mrs. Fowler, in her San Jacinto home surrounded by vines, fruitful trees and rare

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(6) The Corresponding Secretary of the Association "gave a personal bond of \$3,300 to indemnify the plaintiff in the event of an adverse decision." A brief statement of the Indian Rights Association, etc., page 3.

(7) Nearly 40 towns in Southern California felt the shock of the earthquake, on Christmas Day, 1899. Catalogue of Earthquakes on the Pacific Coast 1897 to 1906, by Alexander G. McAdie, M. A. (Smith Misc. Col. No. 1721.)

shrubs. Her cosy home is full of evidences of her genuine love for the Indians. Among her treasures are letters from Mrs. Helen Jackson inquiring about the Indians whose cause she espoused so nobly, including one inquiring about the tragic death of Juan Diego, the Cahuilla Indian whom Mrs. Jackson has surrounded with the charm of her fancy in the character of Alessandro. Tourists following in the footsteps of Ramona are sold the picture of Juan Diego's wife as the "Original Ramona," and baskets made by Cahuilla squaws are labeled "Ramona," as her handiwork, or the work of "Ramona's daughter." As this Indian woman's name was not Ramona, and the heroine of this story was undoubtedly not suggested to Mrs. Jackson by her personality, one marvels at the gullibility of the public. (8)

The name of this reserve "Saboba," means "cold," but the Indians had another for it "Matale de Maño."

The population of the San Jacinto Reservation numbers about one hundred and forty Indians, almost equally divided as to sex. When Mrs. Jackson visited this reserve, she found a "Narrow cañon called Indian cañon in which half a dozen Indian families were living." She immediately wrote to the Department in behalf of these Indians, and the result was that the cañon was set aside for these Indians.

Many of the Indians of this reserve work in American families in the neighboring towns. In fact, the Indians, for the most part, maintain themselves by working on various ranches—a common sight being the little Indian tent by the roadside during the busy days of fruit-picking, grape-vintage, sheep-shearing, etc., all requiring the labor of the Indians in their locality.

The little town of Saboba numbers about thirty houses and as many families. In six years there have been twenty-three deaths and nine births. On one side of the tortuous wagon-road, the prickly pear cactus fence rises in a matted mass from eight to ten feet high around a depressed enclosure. The birds flit in and out of this thorny wall, twittering and calling out as though guarding the cacti from the intrusion of travelers along the dusty road.

The bare-looking little Saboba Catholic church stands on a common in the center of the pueblo, and, at a little distance from it,

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(8) Miss Sheriff (Mrs. Fowler) was succeeded by Miss Mary Noble who taught the school for 12 years. At that time taking up the study of medicine, being now a practicing physician of Los Angeles. Prof. C. C. Painter in his valuable report on the "Condition of Affairs in Indian Territory and California," (1888) spoke of Miss Noble, as a "Catholic girl." He had evidently been misinformed, as this was an error.

along the road, the Government school, surrounded by palm and pepper trees, fenced with a picket fence, attracts the notice of strangers.

One has to be told it is an Indian school, as there is nothing outside nor in, indicative of the nationality. Will H. Stanley, the teacher, a valuable man for the place, is now superintendent as well as teacher. The agency known as the "Mission and Tule River Agency" having come to an end necessitated the combination of the two offices into one. Last autumn the school moved into a new building beside the other one. Several acres are devoted to school purposes, the vegetable garden being a prominent feature in educating the boys. Mrs. May Stanley ably assists her husband by teaching cooking, sewing, etc., to the girls. In this way they give their influence in form of manual labor as a necessary factor in the education of these wards of the nation.

The writing, maps, and figure drawings of the Saboba pupils compare favorably with the average American schools. There is a note of cheerfulness running through their essays. One gets some idea of their home-life from reading some of their little descriptive papers. A boy of eleven writes: "My home has two doors, two windows and one stove. We have two horses. When I go home from school I have to carry water and give water to my horses, and chop some wood and carry it into the house to do cooking with, and I feed my horses at night, and in the mornings, I have to get up very early to do my work before I go to school. My papa is dead; my brother is, too. I have two sisters who are married. They live near to my house. My mother works out picking oranges or potatoes and makes money to get us something to eat and wear."

Another one says: "There are two doors and no windows in my house. My house in Saboba is made of lumber. We have three beds. I have some pictures in my house. My mother makes nice baskets and she sells them to people when they come to buy them. My papa is picking potatoes. When (he) gets done he will buy a shirt and shoes for me. When he comes I got to water the horses and give them hay to eat. I have to build the fire so my mother can cook potatoes, and meat, and make coffee for supper. I got to shut up the chickens when it gets some dark. Then I go to sleep when I have eaten my supper."

The following give a picture of the home and activities of a girl of 13 years: "My house has two windows, three doors. In my house I have beds, chairs, stove, one table, dishes, sewing machine and some pictures on the wall, looking glass, three combs and a brush, also some clothes and blankets. My house is made of lumber. I have two cats and three dogs at home and I like to play with them. We are only five in family. Two girls, one boy and one man and my mother. I have to wash my dishes, and my



sister has to do the cooking. I have to help her cook. I have to carry some water every morning before I come to school. I have to chop wood for my mother in the morning. I have to build the fire for my sister, and I have to take care of my little chickens. In the morning I have to fix my beds, and my mother makes nice drawn work for any one who wants to buy them. My brother J. is working far away making wood for one man, and Uncle A. he is working far, he is going to come home Sundays in the morning and go back afternoon. I am going to give a nice present to my brother on Christmas. My mother has to do her own washing for Miss W., and we have one large lamp that gives us lights. We have two watches that tell us the time and the hours. And we have some plants of flowers around the house and pepper trees to give us cool shade."

An Indian boy of 15 years describes, in detail, how the pupils make garden: "We first plow the ground deep. Then we harrow it so as to break up the clods. Then we fix the soil into beds. Then we rake and break up the small clods what the harrow could not break, and rake it smooth and level. We take a hoe and fix some rows on the beds. Then we plant the seeds. And we cover it over with the soil. Then the seeds grow larger and burst, sending roots down into ground, and the tiny top comes out of the ground. Then we hoe around the tiny plants so they will grow larger. Then if we have water we irrigate them so they will grow faster. In our school garden we raise potatoes, tomatoes, onions, beets, peas, radishes, cabbage, beans, turnips and sweet corn. They do not grow very large because we have no water to irrigate them with. But they are good to eat. At home I have a small garden. First I loosen the ground, then I make a few rows. And then I plant onions, grapes, corn, peas, flowers and other vegetables so we can have them to use and eat."

The largest house in the reservation, numbering six rooms, belonged to the Forest Ranger—a man well fitted for the position; but this year he was supplanted because he could not pass the civil service examination. His little son could enumerate "five beds, five tables, four bureaus, one piano, one graphophone, a sewing machine, and some pictures hanging on the wall"; "six horses, two buggies, one wagon and twenty-four cattle" are also classed among the possessions, and, as the distance from school is too far to walk, he and his brother and sister "ride horseback to school," the ages of these children being 12, 8 and 6 years. Like other Indian boys, he says, "In the evening I carry water to the house."

Formerly Saboba women made numerous baskets, but now it is difficult to supply the demand, even though prices have advanced very considerably. These baskets are of the coiled weave with

brown and black figures as ornamentation. Very pretty little bijou baskets of a globular shape, with a broad top or mouth, are made also by the Cahuilla squaws. There is little difference between these baskets and those made by the Sabobas, both having straw-colored foundations ornamented with varying designs of yellow-brown shades and black, these brown shades often blending beautifully with the straw color of the basket itself.

A notable figure among these Indians was Juliana Ringlero, who died in August. She had reached the age of 102 years and, having concluded that she had lived long enough, for the last three or four days of her life she refused all food and water and so quietly passed away and now sleeps in the little Catholic cemetery not far from the church. She had lived in a little shack that looked more like a stable or shelter for animals than the habitation of a human, one side of the house being covered with sheets of rusty tin roofing, or possibly tin oil cans spread out and nailed to the side, but even these showed that some one had cared for her and would protect her room from cold winds.

Among some of these Sabobas there is a noticeable mixture of Mexican blood, pure breeds being in the minority.

One great drawback for the Indians has been the scanty supply of water, the amount of money available for this purpose being inadequate for cleaning and deepening the reservoir and ditches. The acres cultivated by the school depend upon a windmill for irrigation. The government has apportioned several thousand dollars for irrigation and domestic purposes, Mr. Stanley's efforts in this respect meeting with the success they merited.

In the early 'eighties of the past century Mrs. Helen Jackson visited the settlements of the Mission Indians, and, while she said, "No one can visit their settlements, such as Agua Caliente, Saboba, Cahuilla Valley, Santa Ysabel, without having a sentiment of respect and profound sympathy for men who, friendless, poor, without protection from the law, have still continued to work, planting, fencing," etc., she was forced to remark that "drunkenness" and "gambling" "cannot be denied." And in the report of the late Superintendent of these Mission Indians, he wrote: "The most discouraging feature in all our Indian work is the constant and increasing drunkenness among the Indians and the crimes and debauchery arising therefrom. \* \* \* For a small sum Mexican or miserable white men, who act as go-between, can get the intoxicant."

While we condemn the Indian, we must remember that this liquor habit was originally due to contact with the white man, for Venegas wrote that the Indians of California never used inebriating liquors.

The annual Fiesta in celebration of Mexican independence, is a great event among the Indians, as they congregate at Saboba from

all the neighboring reservation for a three days' carnival. They begin to congregate in the pueblo for two or three days before hand, there being a regular procession of all kinds of conveyances traveling toward Saboba.

The families of the visiting Indians occupy little rooms built of willow around a large court, the numerous booths forming an enclosure for the speakers' stand and dancing platform. Like our Fourth of July, the celebration begins with noise— anvils and other clamorous sounds. Speech-making, music, baseball, games of chance, horse racing, dancing, and closing on Saturday night with the fire dance, with the usual concomitants of booths containing edibles, ice cream, melons, etc., are the amusements of the week.

Although many fears had been expressed that there would be the usual disturbance last year (1908), due to liquor, the Fiesta passed off as the "most orderly celebration held in the Indian village since the settlement of the valley by white men. Not an arrest was made during the week, nor was there reported a case of disorderly conduct. While Chief Special Officer Johnson of the United States Indian Service was present with a number of his deputies to see that order prevailed, the policing of the reservation was left in the hands of the village captain and his Indian officers. \* \* \* The prohibition of liquor is responsible for this being the most orderly Fiesta ever held in Saboba. The officers declare that not a drop of whiskey was drunk on the reservation, and that only in one or two cases, and those among white men, could liquor be detected on the breath. Chief Johnson complimented Superintendent Stanley very highly on the outcome of the Fiesta, for he says it was due more to the counsel the Indians received from their Superintendent during the past months than to any show of authority and power he and his deputies might have impressed them with during the celebration."—*The Los Angeles Times*.

The prospects of the San Jacinto Reservation Indians are, today, very encouraging, although it is to be regretted that the government was too tardy in securing accurate knowledge of the Mission Indians in Southern California. For these primitive people to have become almost extinct before their rights were acknowledged and proper aid secured them, will ever be a cloud upon the history of this "Land of Sunshine."